

Brownfields in RI – What's New in the World of Outreach & Public Participation

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Overview/Background

- ▶ Stakeholder Process → Began Nov. 2006
- ▶ *Draft Policy*: Considering Environmental Justice in the Regulation of Contaminated Sites (July 2007)
- ▶ “Lessons learned” from stakeholder process and subsequent outreach efforts are invaluable
- ▶ Emphasis on early, improved communication & increased public involvement

Stakeholder Process

- ▶ Beginning in Nov. 2006 – RI DEM extensively engaged in a conversation with members of a stakeholder group about considering env. justice in the review of investigation & remediation of contaminated properties
- ▶ Stakeholder process:
 - *Past:* Extensively critiqued RI DEM's existing public engagement process
 - *Future:* Provided a roadmap for improvements in the brownfields program with particular emphasis on communication, outreach and engagement

The Product – An EJ/Brownfields Draft Policy

- ▶ Defines EJ areas within RI
- ▶ Develops new policy approach for enhanced notice/outreach in EJ areas (greater emphasis on public meetings, posting of signs at sites, distribution of fact sheets about specific brownfields projects, etc)
- ▶ Recognizes that not all brownfields redevelopment projects will require the same degree of outreach & communication

Lessons Learned & Larger Thematic Issues

- ▶ Need to increase awareness about RI DEM's responsibilities and programs (especially in urban communities)
- ▶ Need to enhance our ability to communicate with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations
- ▶ Need to ensure compliance with federal law/EPA regulations – e.g. developing EJ grievance procedure
- ▶ How do we address/consider cumulative impacts?
- ▶ Expand the “comfort zone” of RI DEM staff to engage and work with the community

Following Up on Lessons Learned...

What's Been Going On at RI DEM

- ▶ Series of workshops: development community, municipalities, community representatives
- ▶ Ongoing *Community Networking* workshops
- ▶ Training sessions for RI DEM brownfields/site remediation staff
- ▶ Building and using new communication tools: blogs, listservs and more information readily available on our website

Next Steps

- ▶ Continue implementation of draft policy
- ▶ Continue outreach/engagement training for RI DEM site remediation/brownfields staff (through spring 2008)
- ▶ EPA Env. Justice Training for 40+ RI DEM staff in mid-May 2008
- ▶ Continue to track and report on ## of new notifications in env. justice areas
- ▶ Stakeholders reconvening in June 2008
- ▶ Continue to build Community Network
- ▶ Getting RI DEM out of the dark ages → *use of blogs and listservs*

Resources

- ▶ RI DEM Office of Waste Management
www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/waste/index.htm
- ▶ Reinvesting in Rhode Island's Brownfields
www.dem.ri.gov/brownfields/default.htm
- ▶ RI DEM Env. Justice/Brownfields *Site*
www.dem.ri.gov/envequity/index.htm
- ▶ RI DEM Env. Justice/Brownfields *Blog*
www.demenvironequity.net/
- ▶ RI DEM Env. Justice/Brownfields *Listserv*
– *Coming Soon!*

Questions?

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